

# Chapter 2

## Bordering, Border Politics and Cross-Border Cooperation in Europe

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### 2.1 Introduction

Contemporary border studies reflect continuity and change in scientific thought as well as innumerable contributions to the conceptualization of social space and its workings. Through the investigation of borders we realize that there can be no hegemonic dominance of any specific social theory, whether critical or not, in the understanding of space and its social significance. And whereas space is abstract and absolute, we now understand that it is borders that ‘fix’ space and make space concrete as lived and comprehensible social places. As a result of this realization, the study of borders has moved from a dominant concern with formal State frontiers and ethno-cultural areas to the study of borders at diverse socio-spatial and geographical scales, ranging from the local and the municipal, to the global, regional and supra-state level. Furthermore, the robust growth of border studies can partially be attributed to the emergence of counter-narratives to globalization discourses of the late 1980s and early 1990s. For a rather short but influential period, prophecies of ‘borderless worlds’ abounded in which global technologies, cyberspace, capital flows, East-West political convergence and interstate integration would make political borders obsolete. However, perhaps ironically, globalization has instead contributed to research perspectives in which borders have become ubiquitous—not always visible, but always with clear social impacts.

The present state of debate indicates that the field of border studies has opened up possibilities for questioning the rationales behind everyday border-making by understanding borders as institutions, processes and symbols. Borders are thus not given, they emerge through socio-political border-making or *bordering* that takes place within society (Van Houtum and Van Naerssen 2002; Scott 2011). Rather than focus strictly on physical borders as formal markers of territoriality, the bordering perspective is about the everyday construction of borders among communities and

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groups, through ideology, discourses, political institutions, attitudes and agency. As such, it is the process of bordering which brings diverse types of borders within a single frame of analysis. Furthermore, the strategic use of borders, characterized here as ‘border politics’, provides a perspective on bordering that reflects this contemporary discussion.

The concept of border politics raises a series of interesting questions regarding the power relations involved in the making of borders; this manifests itself, for example, in tensions between the local constitution and external determination of borders in society. This has, of course, been amply considered in debates on region-building (Keating 1997; Allen and Cochrane 2007; Davoudi and Strange 2009; Jonas 2012). However, these questions remain relatively underdeveloped in the border studies literature. With reference to debates on regionalism and citizenship, one underlying *bordering* narrative is the idea that bounding of social space can be an incremental and endogenously driven process that creates a shared notion of community (Scott 2007; Wallis 2010). An alternative bordering narrative suggests, on the other hand, that the bounding of social space is increasingly characterised by adaptation to external pressures, producing, among others, ‘post-political’ reinventions of regions, territories and community relations in order to manage the territorial contradictions of global capitalism (see Allen and Cochrane 2007; Brenner 2004). These two generalised border-configuring contexts are not mutually exclusive; they co-exist as elements of social construction that both reference specific geographical spaces as well as functional relationships that are often less territorially fixed.

In the following, the concept of border politics will be developed with regard to the European Union’s conceptualizations of supranational territoriality and its strategic use of State borders in order to advance its geopolitical goals. The EU’s border politics is a complex array of programmes, policies, and imaginaries of political community in which borders are used as resources for different specific aims. Cross-border cooperation, which is the main focus of this paper, is a prominent instrument of the EU’s border politics: it is assumed that with time, CBC will both break down barriers to deeper political and social integration as well as create new development opportunities through communication, ideas and synergies. Similarly, the European Union has attempted to appropriate the idea of ‘borderlands’ as part of its drive to create new spatial contexts for social transformation, regional development and innovation. Cooperation, on the other hand, has been framed as the actual regional-building process across borders.

The EU’s politics of borders, moreover, is both idealistic and practically oriented as evidenced by the complex agendas of ‘Cohesion’ and ‘Neighbourhood’ within which cross-border cooperation discourses are embedded. For example, a central logic of INTERREG and other support programmes of CBC has been the creation of new communities of interest and geographically flexible networks—and to break down territorial and administrative constraints to the exchange of ideas. It is perhaps not an exaggeration to state that the EU has envisaged a project of European construction through the transcendence of local particularisms and boundaries. This idealistic element of the EU’s border politics coexists uncomfortably with the *Real-*

*politik* of implementation. CBC within the EU is embedded in Cohesion Policy and highly territorialised; spatially defined indicators, goals, remits and responsibilities create their own barriers to interaction. At the same time, national implementation of Cohesion Policy remains guided by a fixation with physical investment and development and not on the development of cooperative networks across borders. Furthermore, the context of European neighbourhood deserves attention as the EU's external borders lie at the intersection between the EU's ambitions for influence, acceptance and stability on the one hand, and its territorial anxieties on the other. Economic co-operation and cross-border dialogue compete with border security agendas and the Schengen visa regime (Scott 2005).

In the form of a selective overview, this chapter will relate CBC and the creation of cross-border regions to bordering by emphasizing their political character within the context of European integration. Discussion will begin with a very general overview of the state of the debate in border studies and a specific focus on change and continuity in the framing of State territoriality. This will be followed by a brief discussion of the bordering perspective as a means of interpreting the European Union's role in configuring borders in a wider European context. What emerges in this discussion is that the EU is a border-making actor that reflects a number of different bordering logics. Among these logics we can include the creation of new post-national relational spaces, the consolidation of territorial development within the EU but also the creation of a highly selective border regime that regulates access to the Schengen Area.

## 2.2 Territoriality, Nationhood and Statehood: Change and Continuity in Border Studies

It is important to remember that border studies has its origins in historicist and cultural determinist traditions (inspired by specific interpretations of Herder, Hegel, Darwin, Fichte and others)—in which the emergence of nation States and their borders was understood as an expression of historical necessity and/or 'God's will'. Even without Hegelian undertones, modern nation-states continue to be understood as the highest form of effective social organization within the world system and remain major—if not always the principal—sources of political, cultural and social identity. Major classic studies by scholars such as Ratzel (1903), Hartshorne (1933; 1937), Ladis Kristof (1959) and Julian Minghi (1963) highlighted the co-evolution of borders and States. For Kristof (1959, p. 220), the primary function of boundaries as legal institutions was clear: "... in order to have some stability in the political structure, both on the national and international level, a clear distinction between the spheres of foreign and domestic politics is necessary. The boundary helps to maintain this distinction". We can also detect a clear Cold-War era reification of national hegemony, despite the fact that attempts to create supranational political and economic institutions in Europe began shortly after 1945. Almost sacrosanct was the principal of national sovereignty as a source of geopolitical stability; a stability

that national borders could (and should) provide by serving as effective markers of sovereignty.

In many ways and for good reasons, the State-centered tradition in border studies—and political geography in general—perseveres as a result of historical experience that has been reinforced by current events. Indeed, one of the defining characteristics of Post-Cold War Europe—one which coincided with the proliferation of discourses of ‘borderlessness’ and nation-state decline—has been the drive for national self-determination in Central and Eastern Europe. This drive for de-facto and/or re-asserted sovereignty has shifted the political map of Europe, created new borders and dealt a fatal blow to multinational federations such as Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union. At the same time, this drive for national Statehood also brought with it destructive wars and brutal episodes of ethnic cleansing that have seriously damaged interstate and interethnic relations in Southeast Europe.

Although interdependence and processes of globalization have complicated the picture, the continuous (re)construction of borders based on forms of social-political organization and processes of nation-building remains a central problem in border studies. As Paasi argues (2012, p. 2307) understanding borders is inherently an issue of understanding how States function and thus: “(...) how borders can be exploited to both mobilize and fix territory, security, identities, emotions and memories, and various forms of national socialization”. Further, according to Paasi “this conceptualization of borders suggests that, while it is continually vital to examine how borders and bordering practices come about, it is also critical to reflect on the political rationalities and State-based ideologies embedded in these practices.” There are, of course, open critics of persistent State-centeredness in border studies. Kramsch (2010) has argued that understandings of borders exclusively in terms of the historical emergence of States negates the importance of temporal specificity and everyday mentalities in creating border categories. Kramsch suggests in fact, that it is rather notions of possibilism, rather than a priori ‘state-determination’ that provide a way forward in border studies.

Perhaps in order to put the State-centric focus into perspective it should be mentioned this is not the end of the story; a reification of the State as historically inevitable is not at issue. What is at stake is an understanding of the State that is historically contingent. Additionally, most border scholars do not suggest an immutability of State borders nor an ‘end of history’ mindset, i.e. with regard to a final future world map of nation-states. Furthermore, within border studies it has seldom been suggested that State sovereignty is *absolute* but rather conditional upon many factors; contemporary analysis documents the challenges that transnational processes of an economic, social and political nature have visited upon States (see Flint and Taylor 2007; Held et al. 1999; Agnew 2009). Thus ‘globalized political authority’ as conceptualized by McGrew and Held (2002) suggests a relative shift of political power away from rather than an obsolescence of States.

The reality is thus one of multifarious persistence and incremental change with regards to the role of State in the world system. For example, one important strand of ‘post-national’ theorization is that of the emergence of new political and econom-

ic units that partly incorporate but also beyond the context of the nation-state. The development of multinational and geographically contiguous zones of economic and political co-operation, such as the case of transnational regionalism in East Asia, are one expression of the global forces that are restructuring the world system of individual States (see Perkmann and Sum 2002). Transnational regionalism is a manifestation of ‘geo-governance’, implying the orchestration and regulation of globalization processes.

These questions have an important bearing on our discussion of border politics. European integration is an evolutionary process that has promoted perhaps the most concrete notions of post-national polities and borders proposed to date. This has taken place in concrete forms of shared sovereignty and community policies, the support of local and regional cross-border co-operation and more subtle discursive and ideational forms of Europeanization. Territorial configurations of power in Europe have in this way experienced fundamental change: the exclusive nature of State sovereignty and citizenship has been challenged and the function, significance and symbolism of State borders have been transformed. There is, furthermore, the question whether EU geopolitics, born out of an experience with shared sovereignty, national heterogeneity, cultural difference and large regional disparities, represents an historical break from the power politics and ‘will to hegemony’ so characteristic of more traditional geopolitical doctrines.

### 2.3 Bordering and EU Border Politics

What the above suggests is that contextually sensitive understandings of the concept of post-national borders in no way suggest a disappearance of States or the decline of State territoriality per se. They instead suggest the potential emergence of new borders, new border functions and/or new methods of territorial control that go beyond traditional notions of State territoriality. Post-national borders might thus follow either sub- or supranational logics of political interaction. Such borders are post-national because they create new political functions of integration and interaction across State borders. Understood in these terms, post-national borders might define polities that transcend the jurisdictional and conceptual limits of State-centred orientations, for example as a community of States, as networks of cities or cross-border regions.

Cross-border regions and cooperation thus provide a conceptual bridge to an understanding of borders based on transcending the limits of Stateness and State-centered political action; they also indicate that it is processes of *bordering* that bring diverse spatialities and diverse types of border within a single frame of analysis of the European Union’s politics of borders. The notion of bordering suggests that borders are not only semi-permanent, formal institutions but are also non-finalizable processes. At its most basic, the process of bordering can be defined as the everyday construction of borders, for example through political discourses and institutions, media representations, school textbooks, stereotypes and everyday forms

of transnationalism. Henk van Houtum (2005) use the term ‘bordering’ to refer to the interplay between the ordering (of chaos) and border-making. Physical borders are not there only by tradition, wars, agreements and high politics but also made and maintained by other cultural, economic political and social activities. Everyday ‘bordering and ordering’ practices connive to create and recreate new social-cultural boundaries and divisions which are also spatial in nature. Everyday lived experiences include intersections, differentiations and similarities. Intersectional perspectives pay attention to how gender, age and ethnicity work together and mutually constitute each other through diverse categorizations and selected signs in different ways. What matters and to whom and how some are made more stable than others.

There are, furthermore, overlapping ways of how bordering can be understood (Scott 2011). For example a *pragmatic* approach that derived generalizable knowledge from practices of border transcendence and confirmation a *critical* approach which theorized and questions the conditions that give rise to border-generating categories. These bordering perspectives come together, among other ways, in the present geopolitical climate where, in stark contrast to the 1990s when discourses of ‘de-bordering’ Europe enjoyed substantial currency, the EU’s external borders appear to have become formidable barriers symbolizing civilizational difference between East and West.

At one level, bordering serves to satisfy two basic needs of people—being protected from external and internal threats and determining the territories which belong to particular political, cultural and social groups. These goals are achieved, firstly, through the process of socialization in family, at school and by media, shaping a self-identification of an individual with certain territory, culture and political system. Borders are also necessary to determine not only internal but also external identities of territories, especially the States recognized by the international community, their right to maintain different relations, to create unions and associations, and to be represented in different unions, i.e. to be legal political actors. Secondly, security is supposed to be provided by a sovereign ruler or authorities looking for legitimacy in the eyes of citizens (Newman and Paasi 1998; Newman 2011). The sovereignty of a ruler or other authorities is extended to a specific territory with clearly delineated borders controlled by them.

On a more subtle level, bordering is about a politics of difference. Border narratives, for example, have always, consciously and sub-consciously, thrown up the notion of difference which exists on both sides of the border. In the classic chicken and egg situation, either borders are created to reflect existing differences between groups and cultures and are thus imposed upon the landscape (be it geographic or social) to institutionalize and perpetuate that difference, or borders are imposed upon ‘virgin’ uninhabited spaces and, in deterministic fashion and are thus responsible for the evolution of difference on either side of the line of separation (which is equally a barrier to communication and movement). However, a closer analysis of cross-border narratives would indicate that the opening of borders highlights, rather than diminishes, notions of difference.

New geopolitical perspectives, and the question whether Europe is engaging in post-colonial or neo-imperial bordering practices with new methods, inform much

critical debate on the EU. For example, reference is often made to the European past as a conceptual guide to understanding how a future EU might relate to its citizens, its ‘neighbourhood’ and the rest of the world. One result of this perspective is to see the EU as a quasi-empire, as a new supranational body that uses its considerable power to structure the world and, in particular, its more immediate region. Some readings of the ‘Europe as Empire’ metaphor are rather benign, if not outright positive, such as Jan Zielonka’s (2006) suggestion that a ‘post-modern’ European empire without immutable and excluding borders can generate a hybrid multilevel sense of governance, citizenship and identity. Other notions of European empire are much less sanguine. James Anderson (2007) sees the EU as a Neo-Westphalian reconstitution of core Europe’s political and economic hegemonic ambitions in which the EU is unilaterally imposing its norms (and interests) on new member States and beyond. Similarly, Dimitrovova (2010) argues that the EU engages in traditional State-like politics of difference and exclusion with regard to neighbouring States in East Europe and the Mediterranean.

## 2.4 Cross-Border Cooperation and Politics of Borders

Much of the research of cross-border cooperation—as a project of region-building—has been focused on European borders. Region-building at borders has been encouraged by European policy makers in the period leading up the EU’s eastward enlargement in 2004 as a means of gradually bringing people on both sides (in some cases it can be more than just two adjacent borders) to encounter and know each other before the final opening and removal of the border. The dynamics of what takes place in such regions of transition are not limited to State territories but also to the ways in which groups and cultures develop cross-border meetings of culture within multi-cultural societies as they develop new hybrid modes of cultural and social behaviour.

CBC can be defined in terms of political projects carried out by private, State and, to an extent, third sector actors with the express goal of extracting benefit from joint initiatives in various economic, social, environmental and political fields. Through new forms of political and economic interaction—both institutional and informal—it has been suggested that greater cost-effectiveness in public investment can be achieved, economic complementarities exploited, the scope for strategic planning widened and environmental problems more directly and effectively addressed.

Research interest in CBC has been spurred by the momentous political changes of the past two decades. While the concept of CBC is not new, it is the context of Post-Cold War change that has elevated CBC to the paradigmatic status it now enjoys. ‘De-bordering’ within the enlarged European Union and new cross-border relations in Central and Eastern Europe indicate that not only States but citizens, communities and regions have chosen to open new avenues of communication with their neighbours across national boundaries. Furthermore, in those contexts where

States have (re)gained their independence and new borders have emerged, Euro-regions, cross-border city partnerships and similar cooperation vehicles have also come into being (Scott 2006). CBC within the EU and at the EU's external borders aim at managing issues that transcend the confines of individual communities—issues that include social affairs, economic development, minority rights, cross-border employment and trade, the environment, etc. Cross-border co-operation also involves attempts to exploit borderlands situations, using borders as a resource for economic and cultural exchange as well as for building political coalitions for regional development purposes (Popescu 2008).

Cross-border co-operation between States has been the subject of interdisciplinary and comparative study for almost three decades. This research has been driven by at least one general core concern: i.e. transformations of nation-states and their consequences for economic, political, social and cultural life. Originally, research focused on urban and regional forms of 'subsovereign paradiplomacy'; the pioneering work of Duchacek (1986), Soldatos (1993) and others indicated how cities and regions have pursued economic development and political aims through international co-operation. For example, transboundary strategic alliances between cities, regions and other subnational governments as well as the initiatives of cities to promote their economic and political interests internationally received considerable research attention during the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>1</sup>

Partly spurred on by European Union, the focus of research shifted during the 1990s from empirical research on transnational urban networks and their co-operation mechanisms to a the study of local and regional forms of policy relevant cross-border interaction. A particular European characteristic of this emergent research field has been a more contextually sensitive understanding of the nature of borders themselves. In common understanding, borders are significant State-level processes of 'ordering'. Borders, however, also refer to symbolic boundaries and societal processes that help construct societies at a more general level. In terms of everyday life, borders are formed by the spatial organization of difference; both the reproduction of symbolic systems and the creation of subjective distinctions (borders) between self and other are central to human perception and the organisation of human societies.<sup>2</sup> In some cases borders mark transitions, both physical and cognitive, between different spaces, 'borderlands' define these transitions in concrete spatial terms as evidenced by increasing tendencies towards cross-border co-operation—particularly in Europe (Kolossoff and Scott 2012). In sum and with particular reference to the EU-European situation, borders are seen to play an important role in framing and regulating social relations as well as setting conditions for local and regional development.

The process of 'Europeanization'—defined in terms of a gradual diffusion of supranational understandings of citizenship, territoriality, identity and governance—is

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Briner (1986), Church and Reid (1996) and Steiner and Sturn (1993).

<sup>2</sup> Two informative sources on border research in Europe and in more international terms are two major anthologies that have recently appeared: Wilson and Donnan (2012) and Wastl Walter (2011).



closely related to CBC as well as to changing concepts of borders, both within the EU and beyond the EU's own borders (Scott and Liikanen 2011). A central aspect of this process is the definition of rules, norms and practices that recast national spaces as integral elements of an international political community; from this derive the objectives and values that create a common set of discourses in which various political and social issues can be negotiated. The principal characteristic of this process is the transcendence of strictly national orientations in public policy, development policies and identity. Indeed, the construction of the European Union is in large part an attempt to create a coherent political, social and economic space within a clearly defined multinational community (the EU 27). Borders play an important role in the representation of European nation-states and the EU itself, as well as in the representation of the EU's relations to its neighbours. Cross-border co-operation at the interstate, regional and local levels is seen to provide ideational foundations for a networked Europe through symbolic representations of European space and its future development perspectives.

CBC research has also focused on the European Union's impact on the nature of cross-border relations in Eastern and Central Europe (Popescu 2008; Zhurzhenko 2010; Scott 2006). The EU's influence has been felt at a geopolitical level but also at a more basic societal level (Scott 2005). On the one hand, prospective benefits of closer relations with the EU (including hopes of membership) have provided a context for rapprochement and development. On the other hand, concrete material incentives provided by the EU have been used to begin developing local and regional cooperation initiatives. In preparing Central and East European countries for membership, the EU adopted a strategy based on institutionalized CBC and aimed at a gradual lessening of the barrier function of national borders. These policies have also been aimed at integrating previously divided border regions in order to build a more cohesive European space.

## **2.5 Perspectives on Cross-Border Governance and Co-operation**

Building upon the conceptual foundations of 'subnational paradiplomacy', border studies, particularly in the European case, developed during the 1990s and early 2000s a specific focus on cross-border policy integration as a form of multilevel governance (Perkmann 1999; Lepik 2012). This focus remains an important one in terms of CBC policy within the EU. However, if the former approach positioned CBC within a context of globalization and transnational networks, the European perspective has been largely influenced by formal, structural understandings of transnational governance (see Blatter 1997, 2004). For example, in order to overcome traditional forms of inter-governmentalism, institutionalization at the local and regional levels was seen as a necessary element for successful CBC (Scott 2000). Prospects for transboundary regionalization have been thus defined by the outcomes of a gradual and complex process of institutional innovation and capac-

ity-building at national, State and local levels. At the same time, the emergence of new planning forms across borders were prophesied in terms of regional dialogue. Dialogue, together with adequate strategies with which to reconcile and co-ordinate diverse interests, were seen to offer considerable promise for developing transboundary alliances between cities and their regions (Leibenath et al. 2008).

The EU has played a crucial role in supporting local and regional cross-border governance processes as these are seen to be important aspects of interstate integration and a mechanism for deepening relations with non-EU neighbours. The principal strategy pursued by the EU in supporting CBC has been to couple the development of local and regional cooperation structures with more general regional development policies. This has necessitated a process of institution-building, generally, but not exclusively, in the form of so-called Euroregions or other cross-border associations. In response to the EU's policy initiatives (and its more or less explicit institutionalization imperative). The main goal of Euroregions and similar organizations is to promote mutual learning and co-operative initiatives across borders in order to address specific regional economic, environmental, social and institutional problems. These associations, many with their own cross-border administrative bodies (e.g. councils), represent an additional, albeit strictly advisory, regional governance structure and play a vital role in channelling European regional development support into the border regions. In order to structure their long-term operations and, at the same time, satisfy European Union requirements for regional development assistance, the Euroregions define Transboundary Development Concepts (TDCs) that identify principle objectives of transboundary co-operation and define possible courses of action. TDCs build the basis for concrete projects, proposals for which can then be submitted to the EU, national governments or other funding sources for support.

Euroregions were pioneered and developed as locally based co-operation initiatives in Dutch-German border regions as early as the 1960s (Perkmann 2007). Since then, Euroregions have become part of complex policy networks at the European and national levels and have contributed to 'institutional thickness' in transboundary planning, particularly along Germany's borders. Indeed, the Dutch-German EUREGIO, a Euroregion with its own local council and close ties to German and Dutch State agencies, has served as a model of sorts for the development of border region associations within the European Union. In its different phases of development CBC been characterised by the adaptation of existing institutional structures to new opportunities and problems set by recent geopolitical changes. Given the long track record of cross-border cooperation in Western Europe it is not surprising that cooperation stakeholders in Central and Eastern Europe have emulated many of the institutions and projects pioneered within the EU.

Looking back on the history of cross-border co-operation within the EU, multi-level institutional mechanisms for transboundary co-operation in Europe appear to have contributed significantly to the development of new interregional and transnational working relationships (Perkmann 2002). The popularity of the Euroregion concept is undeniable. These associations are now a ubiquitous feature along the EU's external borders as well in many non-EU European contexts (Bojar 2008;



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